

*"Our Opinion" editorial page  
Pat. Reilly Tues 4/8/97*

## Restoring the South River

With work well under way on the once heavily polluted North River and its precious shellfish beds, officials now are turning their sights to a similar drive to clear pollution from the South River.

This will be no easy task for the North and South Rivers Watershed Association. But they are used to tackling tough jobs and proved a lot of skeptics wrong when they took on the cleanup of the North River.

Last year, six years after beginning the North River project, they announced what was called "outrageously good news"—that the nearly 200 acres of shellfish beds on both side of the river from Damon's Point to the mouth of North River had been rejuvenated.

Now they want to reopen the closed shellfish beds and restore habitats for herring that once spawned upstream on South River. But first they must find and plug up pollution sources.

The South River begins as a reservoir in the northwest part of Duxbury and runs for 12 miles, joining the mouth of the North River at a wide saltwater estuary. Unfortunately people in downtown Marshfield hardly know it exists, even though it runs just beneath their feet. That's because several small tributaries are paved over and there are few places where the public can see it, there are no walking trails along its banks and few places to

launch a canoe. And where there is public access there has been a high bacteria count that makes swimming potentially dangerous during certain times of the year.

But the North and South Rivers Watershed Association hopes to end all that.

The first step is to encourage people to view South River as a valuable resource of cool, clear water—not a dumping ground. This means something has to be done about what has been a major source of pollution, a storm drain just above Willow Street bridge.

And, just as with the North River, there may be illegal sewer connections. This would have been solved if town meeting in 1994 had not rejected a sewer line extension along Route 139.

The Association's first job is to survey the river for pollution "hot spots." It also is going to start an environmentally-based middle school course for students in Marshfield, Duxbury and Scituate, which will include field trips and water testing of the river.

The Association got a good shot in the arm last week with a grant of \$24,700 from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust and the Boston Foundation. More recognition of and support for the association's important work will result in a healthier and more beautiful river in the future.